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U.S., Seoul Sign Accord On Questioning of Park

By William Chapman
Washington Post Foreign Service

SEOUL, Jan. 10—An agreement setting ground rules for interrogating Tongsun Park was signed tonight by representatives of the U.S. Justice Department and the Korean Ministry of Justice.

The agreement sets out the conditions under which Justice Department officials will question Park, the South Korean businessman who is the central figure in the congressional influence-buying investigation.

It was negotiated in an unexpectedly lengthy discussion today between acting Deputy Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti and the South Korean vice minister of Justice, Lee Chong Won.

Details of the agreement were not disclosed, but it covers among other things the scope of the interrogation which is now expected to get under way here Friday.

[The first direct confrontation between U.S. officials and Park occurred early Wednesday when they met at the U.S. embassy to discuss his questioning here and subsequent appearances in American courts, news agencies reported.]

Still to be determined is the location of the questioning which is expected to last for 10 days. The South Korean side has suggested a room in the Seoul district prosecutor's office. U.S. officials have indicated they may prefer another site. Civiletti said tonight he will examine the proposed prosecutor's office before making a decision. Both Civiletti and Vice Minister

Lee told reporters tonight they were satisfied with what is officially called a "mutual prosecution assistance agreement." Among other things it provides a legal underpinning for bringing Park to the United States to give testimony in at least two court cases involving figures indicted in the bribery scandal. It was necessary partly because the United States has no extradition agreement with South Korea.

The two legal officials negotiated for nearly 12 hours, with time out for lunch and dinner, and announced the signing at 10:30 p.m. in the Justice Ministry.

Civiletti said the long discussion was necessary to iron out administrative and mechanical details.

Civiletti said that part of the discussion dealt with the threat by the House ethics committee to subpoena Park when he comes to the United States. But he said there were no negotiations on that subject because it falls outside the bounds of the original agreement on Park's interrogation which was signed here on Dec. 31.

That agreement does not commit Park to testify before Congress and the South Korean government has been opposed to congressional testimony.

Civiletti also said that Rep. Bruce Caputo (R-N.Y.), a member of the ethics committee, which is formally known as the House Committee on Standards of Office Conduct, will sit in on the interrogation as an observer.